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Sustainable mountain development

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolution 53/24 of 10 November 1998, by which it proclaimed 2002 the International Year of Mountains,

Recalling also its resolutions 55/189 of 20 December 2000, 57/245 of 20 December 2002, 58/216 of 23 December 2003 and 60/198 of 22 December 2005,

Reaffirming chapter 13 of Agenda 21[1] and all relevant paragraphs of the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development ("Johannesburg Plan of Implementation"),[2] in particular paragraph 42 thereof, as the overall policy frameworks for sustainable development in mountain regions,

Noting the Bishkek Mountain Platform,[3] the outcome document of the Bishkek Global Mountain Summit, held at Bishkek from 28 October to 1 November 2002, which was the concluding event of the International Year of Mountains,

Noting also the International Partnership for Sustainable Development in Mountain Regions ("Mountain Partnership"), launched during the World Summit on

[1] *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992*, vol. I, *Resolutions Adopted by the Conference* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigendum), resolution 1, annex II.

[2] *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August-4 September 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.II.A.1 and corrigendum), chap. I, resolution 2, annex.

[3] A/C.2/57/7, annex.

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Sustainable Development, with benefits from the committed support of forty-eight countries, fifteen intergovernmental organizations and eighty-three organizations from major groups, as an important approach to addressing the various interrelated dimensions of sustainable development in mountain regions,

Recalling the conclusions of the global meetings of the members of the Mountain Partnership, held respectively in Merano, Italy, on 5 and 6 October 2003, at the invitation of the Government of Italy, and in Cusco, Peru, on 28 and 29 October 2004, at the invitation of the Government of Peru,

Noting the statement of the members of the Adelboden Group on Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development in Mountain Regions (SARD-M), which met in Rome, from 1 to 3 October 2007,

1. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Sustainable mountain development";[4]

2. *Notes with appreciation* that a growing network of Governments, organizations, major groups and individuals around the world recognize the importance of the sustainable development of mountain regions for poverty eradication;

3. *Recognizes* the global importance of mountains as the source of most of the Earth's fresh water, as repositories of rich biological diversity and other natural resources, including timber and minerals, as popular destinations for recreation and tourism and as areas of important cultural diversity, knowledge and heritage, all of which generate substantial positive economic externalities;

4. *Underlines* that mountain regions offer a wealth of vital resources like water, timber, minerals and energy resources, particularly renewable energy resources, such as hydropower, wind and geothermal power;

5. *Recognizes* that mountains provide early indications of global climate change through phenomena such as the retreat of glaciers and modifications of biological diversity;

6. *Notes with concern* that populations in mountain regions are frequently among the poorest of a given country and that there remain key challenges to achieving sustainable mountain development, eradicating poverty in mountain regions and protecting mountain ecosystems;

7. *Recognizes* the crucial role of sustainable mountain development in achieving the Millennium Development Goals;

8. *Encourages* Governments to adopt a long-term vision and holistic approaches in strategies, and promote integrated approaches to policies for sustainable development in mountain regions;

9. *Also encourages* Governments to give higher priority to mountain issues in national, regional and global policymaking, either through incorporating mountain-specific requirements in general sustainable development policies or through specific mountain policies;

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[4] A/62/292.

10. *Notes* that the growing demand for natural resources, including water, the consequences of erosion, deforestation and other forms of watershed degradation, and the occurrence of natural disasters, as well as increasing out-migration, the pressures of industry, transport, tourism, mining and agriculture and the consequences of global climate change are some of the key challenges in fragile mountain ecosystems to implementing sustainable development and eradicating poverty in mountains, consistent with the Millennium Development Goals;

11. *Notes with concern* the accelerating melting of mountain glaciers, and stresses the need to undertake immediate actions to preserve the glaciers as major reservoirs of water in the world;

12. *Underlines* the importance of enhancing the capacity of mountains to serve as natural carbon sinks through effective and sustainable forest management and the avoidance of deforestation, as well as the restoration of lost and degraded forest ecosystems of mountains;

13. *Notes* that sustainable agriculture in mountain regions is important for the protection of the mountain environment and the promotion of the rural economy;

14. *Expresses its deep concern* at the number and scale of disasters and their increasing impact in recent years, which have resulted in massive loss of life and long-term negative social, economic and environmental consequences for vulnerable societies throughout the world, in particular in mountain regions, especially those in developing countries;

15. *Encourages* Governments and other relevant stakeholders to improve awareness, preparedness and infrastructure to cope with regularly occurring disasters in mountain regions, such as flash floods, including glacial lake outburst floods, as well as land slides, debris flow and earthquakes;

16. *Encourages* the scientific community, national Governments and intergovernmental organizations to collaborate with mountain communities to jointly study and address the negative effects of global climate change on mountain environments and biological diversity, as well as the specific concerns of mountain communities, with a view to elaborating sustainable adaptation strategies to cope with the negative impacts of climate change;

17. *Underlines* that action at the national level is a key factor in achieving progress in sustainable mountain development, welcomes its steady increase in recent years with a multitude of events, activities and initiatives, and invites the international community to support the efforts of developing countries to develop and implement strategies and programmes, including, where required, enabling policies and laws, for the sustainable development of mountains, within the framework of national development plans;

18. *Encourages* the further establishment of committees or similar multi-stakeholder institutional arrangements and mechanisms at the national and regional levels to enhance intersectoral coordination and collaboration for sustainable development in mountain regions;

19. *Also encourages* the increased involvement of local authorities, as well as relevant stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector, in the development and implementation of programmes, including the promotion of land tenure, and activities related to sustainable development in mountains;

20. *Underlines* the need for improved access to resources for women in mountain regions as well as the need to strengthen the role of women in mountain regions in decision-making processes that affect their communities, cultures and environments;

21. *Encourages*, in this regard, Governments and intergovernmental organizations to integrate gender dimensions, inter alia gender disaggregated indicators, in their mountain development activities, programmes and projects;

22. *Stresses* that indigenous cultures, traditions and knowledge, including in the field of medicine, are to be fully considered, respected and promoted in development policy and planning in mountain regions, and underlines the importance of promoting the full participation and involvement of mountain communities in decisions that affect them and of integrating indigenous knowledge, heritage and values in all development initiatives;

23. *Recognizes* that many developing countries as well as countries with economies in transition need to be assisted in the formulation and implementation of national strategies and programmes for sustainable mountain development, through bilateral, multilateral and South-South cooperation, as well as through other forms of collaborative approach;

24. *Notes* that funding for sustainable mountain development has become increasingly important, especially in view of the greater recognition of the global importance of mountains and the high level of extreme poverty, food insecurity and hardship facing mountain communities;

25. *Invites* Governments, the United Nations system, the international financial institutions, the Global Environment Facility, all relevant United Nations conventions and their funding mechanisms, within their respective mandates, and all relevant stakeholders from civil society and the private sector to consider providing support, including through voluntary financial contributions, to local, national and international programmes and projects for sustainable development in mountain regions;

26. *Underlines* the importance for sustainable development in mountains of exploring a wide range of funding sources, such as public-private partnerships, increased opportunities for microfinance, including microcredit and microinsurance, small housing loans, savings, education and health accounts, support for entrepreneurs seeking to develop small and medium-sized businesses and, where appropriate, on a case-by-case basis, debt for sustainable development swaps;

27. *Notes* that the awareness of the society as a whole needs to be raised in respect of the role of mountains as an important source of positive externalities[5] like biodiversity, flood and soil protection, water supply and quality, carbon sequestration, avalanche protection, fire protection, cultural landscapes, outdoor recreation as well as cultural heritage;

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[5] Externalities are defined as unaccounted side effects of an economic activity. They may be positive (e.g. preventing floods) or negative (e.g. causing floods). In mountain areas, the beneficiaries of such externalities are downstream water users, food consumers and tourists, while its providers are farmers and other mountain dwellers. In the first place, there is no market for externalities, so they cannot be bought or sold. However, a market can be created in which externalities are valorized.

28. *Underlines* the importance of considering pro-poor national and international policies and national financing instruments, where appropriate, to compensate mountain populations and communities for the provision of such positive externalities;

29. *Notes with satisfaction* the adoption by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity[6] of a programme of work on mountain biological diversity, the overall purpose of which is the significant reduction of the loss of mountain biological diversity by 2010 at the global, regional and national levels, and its implementation, which aims at making a significant contribution to poverty eradication in mountain regions;

30. *Recognizes* that mountain ranges are usually shared among several countries, and in this context encourages transboundary cooperation approaches, where the States concerned agree, to the sustainable development of mountain ranges and information-sharing in this regard;

31. *Notes with appreciation*, in this context, the Convention on the Protection of the Alps,[7] which promotes constructive new approaches to integrated, sustainable development of the Alps, including through its thematic protocols on spatial planning, mountain farming, conservation of nature and landscape, mountain forests, population and culture, tourism, soil protection, energy and transport, and welcomes the recent membership of the Convention in the "Mountain Partnership";

32. *Also notes with appreciation* the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians,[8] adopted and signed by the seven countries of the region to provide a framework for cooperation and multisectoral policy coordination, a platform for joint strategies for sustainable development and a forum for dialogue between all involved stakeholders;

33. *Further notes with appreciation* the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development, which promotes transboundary cooperation among eight regional member countries of the Himalaya Hindu Kush region to foster action and change for overcoming mountain peoples' economic, social and physical vulnerability;

34. *Notes with appreciation* the contribution of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development in Mountain Regions (SARD-M) project and the Adelboden Group in promoting specific policies and appropriate institutions and processes for mountain regions, and the positive externalities they provide;

35. *Stresses* the importance of capacity-building, institutional strengthening and educational programmes in order to foster sustainable mountain development at all levels and to enhance awareness of challenges to and best practices in sustainable development in mountain regions and the nature of relationships between highland and lowland areas;

36. *Encourages* the development and implementation of global, regional and national communication programmes to build on the awareness and momentum for

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[6] United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1760, No. 30619.

[7] Ibid., vol. 1917, No. 32724.

[8] Available from www.carpathianconvention.org/text.htm.

change created by the International Year of Mountains and the opportunity provided annually by International Mountain Day on 11 December;

37. *Also encourages* Member States to collect and produce information and to establish databases devoted to mountains so as to capitalize on knowledge to support interdisciplinary research, programmes and projects and to improve decision-making and planning;

38. *Further encourages* all relevant entities of the United Nations system, within their respective mandates, to further enhance their constructive efforts to strengthen inter-agency collaboration to achieve more effective implementation of relevant chapters of Agenda 21,[1] including chapter 13, and paragraph 42 and other relevant paragraphs of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation,[2] taking into account the inter-agency group on mountains and the need for the further involvement of the United Nations system, in particular the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations University, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the United Nations Children's Fund, as well as international financial institutions and other relevant international organizations;

39. *Recognizes* the efforts of the Mountain Partnership implemented in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 2003/61 of 25 July 2003, invites the international community and other relevant stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector, to consider participating actively in the Mountain Partnership to increase its value added, and invites the Partnership secretariat to report on its activities and achievements to the Commission on Sustainable Development at its sixteenth session, in 2008, including in regard to the thematic issues of agriculture, rural development, land, drought and desertification;

40. *Notes with appreciation* in this context the efforts of the Mountain Partnership to cooperate with existing multilateral instruments relevant to mountains, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity,[6] the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa,[9] the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change,[10] the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and mountain-related regional instruments such as the Convention on the Protection of the Alps and the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians;

41. *Takes note with appreciation* of the offer of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic to host a second Bishkek Global Mountain Summit in October 2009, and of the invitation to Member States, the United Nations system and other relevant stakeholders to take part in such a summit;

42. *Requests* the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session on the implementation of the present resolution, under a sub-item entitled "Sustainable mountain development" of the item entitled "Sustainable development".

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[9] United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1954, No. 33480.

[10] Ibid., vol. 1771, No. 30822.